

Wednesday, 27 May 2026

Excellence Takes Centre Stage at Hospitality NT's Night of Nights

The Northern Territory's finest hospitality talent was celebrated in style last night at the 2026 Hospitality NT Awards for Excellence, held at the iconic Darwin Ski Club. Close to 500 industry leaders, award nominees, and guests gathered under the stars for a night of recognition and entertainment—including a fantastic performance by Juju & the Lips and Chunkydip.

Hospitality NT's Chief Executive Officer, Cathy Simmonds praised the Territory's thriving hospitality scene, saying, "While we celebrate the rewards and efforts of dozens of success stories tonight, the Excellence Awards are a celebration of all the venues, the teams, and the people behind the tills and the bar, working hard to put a smile on the face of others."

"Our industry continually strives for success and builds on innovation to make it better and better every day – from unique products to world class experiences, and the excellence that locals and visitors come to expect from the Northern Territory, every venue plays a critical role in shaping story and lifestyle which is propped up by the hospitality industry."

"Our industry is one, if not, the best at looking after each other through hard times, as well as supporting each other's successes – that's what the Awards for Excellence are all about."

The Cinema Collective dominated the awards, achieving an impressive five-win sweep with **Best Overall Pub/Tavern, Best All Abilities Venue, Best Late Night Venue** and **Best Marketed Pub**, with the **Hospitality Industry Rising Star Award – General Division** going to **Patrick Young**. Their success highlighted both their exceptional range of offerings and commitment to staff development and community impact.

Making a huge impact on the hospitality scene this year is the return of an RSL affiliated venue in the **Darwin Services Club**, winning gongs for **Best Overall Club, Best Club Bar Presentation, Best Redeveloped Club** and **Best New Venue**. The new Esplanade based venue has appealed to a wide audience, providing a refreshing take in the picturesque Admiralty House.

Hilton Garden Inn proved popular, coming on top in the **Best Overall Accommodation Hotel and Best Mid Range Accommodation** categories as well as **Service Excellence Front of House** for their much-valued employee **Dinushka Goonathilake**, while **Novotel, Mercure & Ibis Darwin Airport** also had success winning **Best Superior Accommodation** and **Best Outdoor Area** sections.

Unique products and experiences which help the Territory rise above were also acknowledged, with **Sunrise Journeys** at **Ayers Rock Resort** named the **Best Tourism Initiative**, while **The Alice Dry Gin** from **Darwin Distilling Co** received the gong for the **Best New Local Product**.

This year's Awards for Excellence saw an extraordinary display of talent and dedication, with 313 outstanding nominations submitted across all categories—including more than 40 nominations in our highly competitive Employee Awards.

Every single staff member nominated for awards in 2026 is an individual representing the very heart of our industry, consistently going above and beyond their roles to deliver exceptional service and take their venues to new heights. Their passion and commitment don't just benefit their businesses, but also elevate the true Territory experience for visitors and locals alike. Some exceptional staff members who's work was highlighted in the awards were:

- **Apprentice/Trainee of the Year** – **Katie Pinker**, Berry Springs Tavern
- **Marketing/Sales/Events Employee of the Year** – **Sophie Colley**, Berry Springs Tavern
- **Service Excellence Front of House** – **Dinushka Goonathilake**, Hilton Garden Inn
- **Hospitality Industry Rising Star Award, Accommodation Division** – **Pitchana Narithanasarn**, Hilton Darwin
- **Hospitality Industry Rising Star Award, General Division** – **Patrick Young**, The Cinema Collective
- **Sales Representative of the Year - Beverage** – **Grant Wallace**, Asahi Beverages
- **Sales Representative of the Year - Industry** – **Jessica Bussey**, TAB & MAX

Below is a list of all of the 2026 Awards for Excellence Winners, with eligible categories now in the running for the National AHA Awards for Excellence to be held in November on the Gold Coast.



WINNERS LIST

2026 Hospitality NT Aristocrat Technologies Awards for Excellence

Award Category	Winner
Outstanding Club Community Service & Achievement	Cazalys Palmerston Club
Outstanding Accommodation Hotel Community Service & Achievement	Crown Plaza Alice Springs Lasseters
Outstanding Pub/Tavern Community Service & Achievement	Noonamah Tavern
Best Tourism Initiative	Sunrise Journeys Ayers Rock Resort
Service Excellence Front of House	Dinushka Goonathilake Hilton Garden Inn
Best Marketing/Sales/Events Employee	Sophie Colley Berry Springs Tavern
Apprentice/Trainee of the Year	Katie Pinker Berry Springs Tavern

Hospitality Industry Rising Star Award – Accommodation Division	Pitchana Narithanasarn Hilton Darwin
Hospitality Industry Rising Star Award – General Division	Patrick Young The Cinema Collective
Sales Representative of the Year - Beverage	Grant Wallace Asahi Beverages
Sales Representative of the Year – Industry	Jessica Bussey TAB & MAX
Outstanding Achievement in Training	Novotel Darwin CBD
Best Pub Gaming Venue	The Midway
Best Club Gaming Venue	Silks
Best TAB Licensed Venue	Lizards Bar & Restaurant
Best NT Keno Venue	Virginia Tavern
Best Draught Beer Quality – Regional	Dundee Beach Tavern
Best Draught Beer Quality – Metro	Breezes Bar & Grill
Best Pub Bar Presentation & Service	Hotel Darwin
Best Club Bar Presentation & Service	Darwin Services Club
Best All Abilities Venue	The Cinema Collective
Best Backpacker Accommodation	MOM Darwin
Best Pub Style Accommodation	Daly Waters Pub
Best Mid Range Accommodation	Hilton Garden Inn
Best Superior Accommodation	Novotel, Mercure & Ibis Darwin Airport
Best Late Night Venue	The Cinema Collective
Best Outdoor Area	Novotel, Mercure & Ibis Darwin Airport
Best Live Music Venue	Mayberry Darwin
Best Family Friendly Venue	Palmerston Golf & Country Club
Best Sporting Entertainment Venue	Nightcliff Sport Club
Best Redeveloped Club	Darwin Services Club
Best Redeveloped Pub/Tavern	Bill's Bar and Grill
Best Redeveloped Accommodation Hotel	Mercure Airport Resort Darwin

Best Marketed Pub	The Cinema Collective
Best Marketed Club	Casuarina All Sports Club
Best Marketed Accommodation Hotel	Crab Claw Island Resort
Best Retail Liquor Outlet	Noonamah Tavern
Best New Venue	Darwin Services Club
Best New Local Product	The Alice Dry Gin - Darwin Distilling Co
Best Small Bar	Hanky Panky Lounge
Best Wayside Inn/Outback Pub	Daly Waters Pub
Best Overall Accommodation Hotel	Hilton Garden Inn
Best Overall Regional Club	Club Eastside
Best Overall Regional Pub/Tavern	Berry Springs Tavern
Best Overall Club	Darwin Services Club
Best Overall Pub/Tavern	The Cinema Collective